

# Empowering Women



Photo by Alejandro Chicheri

Despite 23 years of war, Afghan urban women enjoyed a long history of freedom before the Taliban assumed power. Women were government ministers and members of the country's highest legislative body. Under the Taliban, Afghan women were shunned from public life, often prohibited from working outside the home, and punished for showing their faces. Education was forbidden.

USAID is giving Afghan women the education, skills, and tools they need to obtain jobs, support their families, and integrate into the political and public life of this new stage in Afghanistan's history. The situation for women has improved markedly, but much work remains.

## USAID

- Provided \$2.5 million to build 14 women's centers in the provinces. Each location will include audiovisual equipment, computers, libraries, and a daycare center. Centers will provide vocational training and human rights awareness to women.
- Re-established schools and classrooms for more than 12,000 girls around Mazar-e-Sharif.
- Completed a grant to support war widows through handicraft training. Efforts are currently underway with carpet vendors to encourage the employment of women who graduated from the course.
- Renovated the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs and helped establish operations and program development. Funded the creation of the ministry's Women's Resource Center, a library, Internet room, and audiovisual training center.
- Supports Ariana, a national women's NGO, which provides educational and vocational courses for women and girls to fill a gap in the educational system of Afghanistan. USAID funded general repairs of Ariana's building and is providing training supplies and equipment.
- Is funding bakeries that employ widows and provide bread to Afghanistan's urban poor. At least 250,000 people were assisted in 2002.

Website: [www.usaid.gov/afghanistan](http://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan)

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